

UK court rejects Tesla lawsuit against BBC (Update)

March 5 2013

Britain's Court of Appeal on Tuesday threw out a lawsuit against the BBC by electric car maker Tesla Motors over a program that criticized its Roadster vehicle.

The company sued the broadcaster for libel over a 2008 episode of the popular "Top Gear" show.

Host Jeremy Clarkson claimed the car would only run for 55 miles (88 kilometers) between charges, far less than billed. He called the car "an astonishing technical achievement ... It's just a shame that in the real world it doesn't seem to work."

Palo Alto, California-based Tesla lost a claim before the High Court in 2011 but was given permission to appeal.

Three judges dismissed the appeal on Tuesday, saying they were not persuaded that "the case which Tesla seeks to make ... has any real prospect of success."

Irreverent automotive show "Top Gear" is one of the BBC's most popular programs in Britain and abroad. Clarkson, its best-known host, is renowned for his jokey machismo and provocative opinions. In 2011, he angered unions by saying that striking public sector workers should be shot. The same year, the BBC apologized to Mexico's ambassador after Clarkson and his co-hosts described Mexicans as lazy and oafish.

Tesla has recently been embroiled in a spat with the New York Times over an article claiming its Model S electric sedan ran out of power during a road trip and had to be towed to a recharging station. Tesla CEO Elon Musk challenged the story.

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